DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 358 907 JC 930 381

AUTHOR	Avalos, Juan; Pavel, D. Michael
TITLE	Improving the Performance of the Hispanic Community College Student. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Los Angeles, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-JC-93-03
PUB DATE	May 93
CONTRACT	RI88062002
NOTE	3p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Academic Persistence; Ancillary School Services; College Transfer Students; Community Colleges; Counseling Services; Educational Research; English (Second Language); *Hispanic Americans; Mentors; Program Descriptions; *Role Models; *School Holding Power; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS	*Enlace Project CA; *Puente Project CA

ABSTRACT

Community colleges play a major role in improving the access of Hispanic students to higher education, with roughly 56% of all college-going Hispanics attending these institutions. Relatively few however, have attained a postsecondary degree of any kind. A study of 145 community colleges found that Hispanic student retention was influenced by such factors as financial aid grants, career counseling into selective programs and participation in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and Hispanic Studies classes. Two successful retention programs, the Puente Project and the Enlace program, incorporate multiple elements associated with increased Hispanic retention. The Puente Project is a state-wide community college program in California employing specially trained English instructors, Hispanic counselors, and Hispanic corporate professionals acting as mentors. The Enlace program at Evergreen Valley College (EVC) in California, extended the college's Puente Project to include a focus on improving math skills. A study conducted at EVC showed that between 1983 and 1986, Puente students had higher course completion rates in English, earned more degrees, and had higher transfer rates than other Hispanic students at the college. A study of Enlace students at EVC revealed higher math completion rates than the Hispanic general student population. Suggestions for improving Hispanic student transfer rates include strengthening of articulation agreements with four-year institutions, improving the peer support system, and increasing the representation of Hispanic role models in staff and administrative positions. (PAA)

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
University of California at Los Angeles
8118 Math Sciences Building
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90024
310.825.3931

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Digest

May 1993

EDO-JC-93-03

ED358907

JC930381

IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT

by Juan Avalos and D. Michael Pavel

Community colleges play a major role in improving the access of Hispanic students to the American system of higher education. Roughly 56% of all college-going Hispanics attend community colleges, largely because they are inexpensive, offer pertinent instruction, and have close ties with the community. Relatively few, however, have attained a postsecondary degree of any kind, making retention and transfer paramount concerns.

Recent Research on Retention

Two factors influencing Hispanic community college student retention are financial aid and academic support (Fields, 1988; Nora, 1990; Rendón and Nora, 1988, 1989; Walker, 1988). Nora (1990) found that Hispanic community college students who receive higher levels of non-campus- and campus-based financial aid awards in the form of grants (versus loans and workstudy) were enrolled in more semesters, earned more semester hours, and received some form of credential. Non-campus and campus-based financial aid awards were found to be more positively related to Hispanic students' retention than the students' high-school grades or their cumulative grade point average at the community college. Rendón and Nora (1988, 1989) also found that many Hispanic students may be denied financial aid because they overestimate actual income on financial aid forms. Fields (1988) found Hispanic students' low attainment rate associated with the need to support themselves or their families or with other financial reasons. Other factors included lack of motivation, time conflicts, inability to cope with college demands, lack of academic preparation, and poor academic performance.

Research supports the need for multiple-action programs to improve retention. Walker (1988) examined the strategies used by 145 community colleges in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas to retain Hispanic students. She found that improvements in retention were associated with financial aid grants, career counseling into selective programs, and participation in English as a Second Language (ESL) and Hispanic studies classes. Rendón and Taylor's (1990) ten-point action plan calls for community colleges to:

- Develop strong linkages with feeder schools
- Build coalitions between the college, family, business, and the community at large
- Involve the Hispanic family in the education process
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by setting high and reasonable faculty expectations of the students, continually measuring their learning and growth, including Hispanic perspectives in the classroom, and faculty staying current in their teaching field
- Improve counseling and advisement
- Engage students in the academic and social fabric of the college
- Increase the number of Hispanic students who transfer
- Increase the number of Hispanic students in high tech programs
- Train faculty to use assessment as a teaching tool
- Collect student data.

Puente Project and Enlace

Two successful programs that characterize multi-action efforts are the Puente Project and the Enlace program. Puente Project is a state-wide community college program in California. Its goals are to increase retention, general education requirement completion, and transfer among Hispanic students. The Puente Project employs specially trained English instructors, Hispanic counselors, and Hispanic professionals acting as mentors who are dedicated to improving students' academic performance, level of self-confidence, and motivation (Maestas-Flores and Chavez, 1987). Enlace evolved from Evergreen Valley College's Puente Project; hence, there are many similarities in the goals and frameworks of the two programs. As their names would indicate, Enlace and Puente "bind" together or create a "bridge" between students, teachers, and the corporate community. Both programs provide students with individualized nontraditional counseling, academic instruction, and personal contact with Hispanic professionals as mentors. In addition, the goals of Enlace extend to improving math as well as English skills. Studies on program outcomes indicate a high level of success among students participating in the Puente Project (Atondo and others, 1986; Saucedo 1991) and Enlace (Chavez and Maestas-Flores, 1991).

Atondo and others (1986) conducted their study at Evergreen Valley College to determine the success rate of Puente students for the years 1983 through 1986 and to compare the achievement levels of Puente students enrolled in the entry-level English 330 courses with those of other Hispanic students who began in English 330 during the same semester. The three-year comparative study of 115 Puente students and 273 Hispanic counterparts found:

- 89% of the Puente students completed English 330 compared to 46% of the other Hispanic students
- 70% of the Puente students completed English 1A, compared to 8% of the other Hispanic students
- 53% of the Puente students completed English 1B, compared to 17% of the other Hispanic students
- All twenty-one of the Hispanic students who began English 330 in fall 1983 and 1984 and who had received or applied for an associate degree by fall 1985

were enrolled in the Puente Project
- All fourteen of the students from the original group who transferred to a four-year college were Puente students.

A recent study by Saucedo (1991) focused on the performance of Puente Project students compared to that of other Mexican-American and White students in community college. The combined Mexican-American group started with overall lower grammar skills than did the White group. The Puente group had a higher mean grade point average than did either the non-Puente Mexican-Americans or the White students. The Puente students had a comparatively higher retention level than either other group.

Chavez and Maestas-Flores (1991) found that Enlace math students who enrolled in the Algebra I pilot section in fall 1988 had an 86% course completion rate, compared to 36% for Hispanics in seven other college sections. Of that fall 1988 group, 50% of the Enlace students completed the spring 1989 Algebra II section, compared to 2% of the general college group. Overall, Enlace students performed better in class and successfully completed more courses.

Transfer

Transfer is often cited as a factor in Hispanic community college student retention. Rendón and Nora (1989) indicate that California, which has the most Hispanics in the largest system of community colleges in the country, experiences the greatest transfer losses among Chicano and Black freshman students. Cohen (1984) believes the reason for low transfer rates to four-year institutions might be related more to the overall composition of the students that attend community colleges than to ethnicity alone. However, he feels that the situation may be getting better for Hispanics because of improvements in financial aid, increased interest by philanthropic foundations, and the creation of college-level, minority-oriented programs. To improve Hispanic transfer rates, Cohen suggests the development and strengthening of articulation agreements with four-year institutions, the implementation of stronger remediation and counseling services, and an increase in special activities for Hispanic students that enhance the peer support system.

Staffing

Another factor related to retention is the scarcity of Hispanic role models in both overall numbers and in representation across academic fields. Garza (1984) suggests that the representation of Hispanics in the staffing patterns at community colleges can be improved. The first step is to establish long-term programs that promote the institutionalization of positive change for Hispanic achievement. Access to staff positions can be increased by the dissemination of job vacancy notices to Hispanics and by providing mentors for Hispanics entering administrative positions. Finally, an increase in Hispanic women administrators can be achieved by establishing a mentoring system, highlighting the need for diversity and role models through the media and written articles, and developing a proposal for the training of Hispanic women for administrative positions.

Conclusion

To better serve Hispanic students, community college educators must learn more about their educational goals and achievements (Burgos-Sasscer, 1987). Future research on Hispanic students should address the misconceptions about the Hispanic population and their diverse characteristics, study the persistence of the various Hispanic subgroups nationally and report subgroup specific rather than general results, explore new ways of assessing Hispanic students' capabilities and predicting their college performance, and study the impact of family influence on the educational goals and achievements of Hispanic students. The results of this research should inform program planning directed toward the goal of more Hispanics achieving a college degree.

References

Atondo, A. And Others. *A Study of the Puente Project: 1983-1986*. San Jose, Calif.: Evergreen Valley College, 1986. 59 pp. (ED 278 448)

Burgos-Sasscer, R. "Empowering Hispanic Students: A Prerequisite Is Adequate Data." *Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership*, *7* (1), 21-34.

Chavez, M., and Maestas-Flores, M. "Minority Student Retention: Enlace." In D. Angel and A. Barrera (eds.), *Rekindling Minority Enrollment*. New Directions for Community Colleges, #74. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

Cohen, A. M. "Hispanic Students and Transfer in the Community College." Paper presented at the Hispanic Roundtable Talk of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Phoenix, Ariz., May 23, 1984. 17 pp. (ED 243 543)

Fields, C. "The Hispanic Pipeline: Narrow, Leaking, and Needing Repair." *Change*, 1988, *20* (3), 20-27.

Garza, M. "Current Staffing Patterns." *Hispanic Achievement: A Commitment of Community Colleges and Business Enterprise*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1984.

Maestas-Flores, M., and Chavez, M. *Puente Project: The Mentor's Guide*. San Jose, Calif.: Evergreen Valley College, 1987. 46 pp. (ED 339 967)

Nora, A. "Campus-Based Aid Programs as Determinates of Retention among Hispanic Community College Students." *Journal of Higher Education*, 1990, *61* (3), 312-327.

Rendón, L., and Nora, A. "Hispanic Students: Stopping the Leaks in the Pipeline." *Educational Record*, 1987-88, *68* (4), 79-85.

Rendón, L., and Nora, A. "A Synthesis and Application of Research on Hispanic Students in Community Colleges." *Community College Review*, 1989, *17* (1), 17-24.

Rendón, L, and Taylor, M. "Hispanic Students: Action for Access." *Community, Technical, and Junior College Journal*, 1989-90, *60* (3), 19-22.

Saucedo, M. *Puente Project Student's Performance*. Report on Spring 1988 Sabbatical Leave. 54 pp. (ED 339 967)

Walker, D.K.P. *Strategies for Increasing Retention of Hispanic Students in Community Colleges*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1988. 149 pp. (ED 295 708)

The Clearinghouse operates under OERI Contract No. RI-88-06-2002. The opinions expressed in this digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of OERI and no official endorsement by OERI should be inferred.